



Squad: Foundation of the Decisive Force (SFDF)

June 2014



Over a decade of combat experience in Afghanistan and Iraq has revealed the need to improve the effectiveness of small units as they engage with determined, elusive enemies in austere, complex environments. Since 2001, our Army has adapted continuously to fulfill our Soldiers' operational needs. We now have an opportunity to consolidate what we have learned while ensuring that our Soldiers and units are prepared to fight and win across the range of military operations in future armed conflict. Our enemies and adversaries will continue to adapt, improve their combat capabilities, and employ tactical and technological countermeasures to evade advanced US surveillance, intelligence collection, and precision strike capabilities. Our Soldiers and our foundational tactical formation, the Squad, must be prepared to fight and win engagements with the enemy at close quarters in urban and complex terrain.



In response to a Chief of Staff of the Army directive, the Maneuver Center of Excellence completed a study, developed a concept for future Squad operations, and established a team to integrate efforts across over 80 organizations. These organizations span the Army acquisition, research and development communities, industry, the Marine Corps, Special Forces, and

the 75th Ranger Regiment. The purpose of those efforts was to identify operational gaps and take action to mitigate them to ensure that US Army Squads achieve overmatch against current and future enemies and are able to accomplish tough missions in complex environments.



In October 2013, the SFDF team conducted a review of the original 22 squad gap statements, which included their specific task, condition and standard. The team condensed one gap and prioritized and clarified all 21 squad gaps. Squad capabilities reach across 5 domains (lethality, mission command, training and leader development, mobility and force protection) and the team continues to recommend actions to close those gaps. Integrated efforts across the five domains are oriented on clearly defined and mutually reinforcing objectives to allow the Squad to:

- Operate in complex and uncertain environments
- See and fight across a wide area
- Make contact with the enemy under favorable conditions
- Overmatch the enemy in encounter actions
- Maneuver rapidly to seize and retain the initiative
- Identify and act on opportunities
- Adapt rapidly to changing conditions of battle
- Operate as part of a combined arms, air-ground, Joint team

The Dismounted Non-Network Enabled Limited Objective Experiment (LOE) was conducted in 2013 to validate or adjust the Army's Operational Concept for the future squad, inform priority requirements development, and accelerate the availability of critical capabilities. This experiment sought improvements in internal Squad capabilities to include: optics, Squad agility, weapons, power management/generation and target location capabilities.

In 2014 the Maneuver and Fires Integration Exercise (MFI) Phase I & II, a joint endeavor with the Fires Center of Excellence (FCoE), are scheduled with the purpose to increase the Squads ability to defeat threat unmanned aerial surveillance, obtain near real time situational understanding, employ precise fires and achieve increased mobility through tactical resupply. This experiment is also looking at alternatives to reduce the Soldier load.

Less tangible improvements in training, the cognitive and psychological dimensions of preparation for combat, and leader development and education are also vital to improving the internal capabilities of the Squad. Cognitive and psychological preparation will help Soldiers and leaders identify the presence of the extraordinary and the absence of the ordinary.

Building competent, confident leaders at the Squad level is and will remain an essential element of success in combat. Improving the Programs of Instruction for the Warrior Leader's Course, Advanced Leader's Course, and Maneuver Senior Leader's Course to include increased tactical training replicating the conditions of combat is critical to the success of our Squad efforts.

Accessing external combined arms and Joint capabilities and achieving mutual support with other units requires reliable communications. Because Squads engage the enemy in close

combat, they are the formations that have the greatest need for access to the tactical network for situational awareness including friendly unit locations and the locations of identified enemy forces. Extending the tactical internet to the Squad will provide our forward-most units with enhanced awareness of the battlefield including information obtained through reconnaissance to help Squads make

contact under favorable conditions and ensure that our forces do not have to fight for information about the enemy more than once. Improved situational awareness at the Squad level will also permit rapid employment of fires and air support as well as ease coordination

with adjacent units to ensure mutual support.

Innovations associated with SFDF will help Soldiers understand the context of their mission to include civil considerations such as local political and cultural dynamics so Squads report complete, accurate and mature estimates of the situation.

The Squad is the foundation of the Decisive Force. Closing gaps in capabilities will ensure the Army's foundational tactical unit can close with and destroy the enemy under all conditions of battle and accomplish missions in complex environments. The integration of Squad-related initiatives across numerous capability portfolios is essential to success. Realizing this objective will require adjustments across the portfolios of Soldier Systems, Training, Precision Fires, Assured Mobility and Intelligence. The Maneuver Center of Excellence is working with TRADOC and the Army Staff through the Squad Portfolio Review to affect these adjustments.

